

Choosing the Right Fence

Goats are often referred to as “escape artists.” With this in mind, it is recommended to use S-knot or fixed-knot 4-inch-by-4-inch woven wire.

Animal type and their safety needs are important factors to consider before putting up a fence, says Steven Sarson, a Bekaert Fence Pro and Technical Sales Manager.

“Fencing isn’t a one-size-fits-all product. Some animals are easier to fence in than others – and depending on the animal, some fence styles pose safety risks,” explains Sarson, who has spent nearly 30 years helping customers select the right wire for their projects.

Finding the best fence style to meet containment goals and animal safety depends on animal type, fence location and stocking density. With these considerations in mind, Sarson shares his suggestions. “I know customers who are able to keep animals in and safe with all kinds of fence styles. However, experience has taught me the best and safest ways to keep animals and their owners who care about them safe, so those are the suggestions I share.”

Cattle

Because cattle are rather easy to fence in, a variety of wire types and styles work well. Stocking density is the largest factor to consider when selecting fence for cattle.

“Depending on stocking density, a fence is either a physical barrier or a boundary,” explains Sarson.

High stocking density:

- Woven wire
- Four to six strands of barbed wire
- Four to six strands of smooth wire, two to three strands of which are electric



Fixed Knot: A locking fixed knot ties the vertical stay wires and the horizontal line wire together, providing maximum strength up to 1,385 pounds of pressure.

Low stocking density:

- Same designs as above for barbed and smooth wires. However, fewer wires can safely be used.

Horses

Sarson recommends using an S-knot 2-inch-by-4-inch non-climb woven wire for horse fence applications. The S-knot does not catch on their hide if they rub up against it and the 2-inch-by-4-inch opening will not allow a foal’s hoof through, making it safer for the animals.

“Horses have a tendency to kick or paw at a fence, so openings need to be small. I’ve heard if you can put a soda can through a fence opening, a horse’s hoof can get caught.”

Sarson recommends horse owners avoid barbed wire because of the risk to their hides. He also cautions them against types of woven wire with larger openings.

Goats and sheep

Sarson refers to goats as “escape artists.” With this in mind, he recommends S-knot 4-inch-by-4-inch or fixed-knot woven wire with 3 or 12-inch-wide openings.

Because of a goat’s tendency to stick their head through a fence, Sarson recommends keeping openings larger than 6 inches or smaller than 4 inches.

Similar fencing works well for sheep. In addition, Sarson has several customers who have good luck with five or six strands of smooth wire, if a few are electric.

Hogs

Two options work well for free-range hogs:



S-Knot: The smooth, snag-resistant, the S-knot also combats buckling and sagging.

35-inch-tall, fixed-knot woven wire fence or three to four strands of smooth wire that are electric.

“The key to electric fencing is to train your animals to the fence. You can keep a lot of animals in with an electric fence. But if you just put it up, and don’t train them, they will go right through it. They need to learn to respect it.”

Llamas

If raising a herd of llamas, Sarson recommends a 4 to 5-foot high, woven wire, fixed-knot fence. However, Sarson also knows producers who run a few llamas with their sheep and have success using five or six strands of smooth wire with a few electric. “I don’t recommend barbed wire because you run into hide damage issues.”

Diversified Livestock

“I am frequently asked, ‘what fence is best for my daughter’s two 4-H steers, the club lamb, three goats and an old horse that my wife rides once a month?’ Believe it or not, there is a fence that will work to keep in a menagerie,” Sarson says. He explains the best option for a wide mix of animals is a fixed-knot woven wire fence, 13 horizontal line wires, 48-inches tall and a 3 or 12-inch vertical (stay) wire. “Woven wire designs,



Two options work well for free-range hogs: 35-inch tall, fixed-knot woven wire fence or three to four strands of smooth electric wire.

with similar openings will also work,” he says. “Keep in mind, it is very important to use the fence that will keep in the animal that is the greatest flight or safety risk.”

Cost-per-foot or mile

Regardless of what is being fenced in, Sarson says that if the right materials and coatings are used, the fence will last a long time and end up costing less-per-foot to purchase and install.



Depending on geographic location, a protective coating may be a good decision. Coatings prevent rust and corrosion, protecting a fence’s wire and accessories because they contain another metal, like zinc or aluminum, that will give themselves up to protect iron and steel.

“Unless you like building and fixing fence, buy products that will last. They will save you time and will cost less-per-foot.”

He also recommends buying fencing wire that is high-tensile. “Tensile strength is the resistance of steel or another material to break under pressure,” Sarson says, explaining, “The higher tensile strength and smaller gauge results in a lighter yet stronger wire, which reduces cost-per-roll, risk of sag and the number of fence posts needed to complete the project.”

Protective wire coatings affect a fence’s longevity. Coating durability depends heavily upon climate. “In the Northeastern U.S. where I live, or in the Southeast, there is a lot of moisture and humidity in the air, as well as corrosive acid rain, so I suggest using the best coatings available,” Sarson says. “In the Midwest or West, where the climate is drier, a fence with a lighter coat weight may work as well as a heavier coating does in the Northeast. Remember, a Class 3 coating is three times heavier than a Class 1 coating.”

Protective coatings, which are zinc or a zinc/aluminum mix, act to prevent rust and corrosion because they give themselves up to protect the iron and steel base used for the wire and many of the accessories used during installation. This protection of the base wire and installation accessories add tremendously to the longevity of the fence.

Still have questions? Finding answers is simple. **Reach out to Sarson and the Bekaert team of fence pros by visiting** <https://fencing.bekaert.com>.

The site also features installation tips and a fencing calculator that makes it easy to determine the amount of fencing needed for a project. **Find the calculator here:** <https://fencing.bekaert.com/en/fencing-calculator>.

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